

TO MY SON

An Expositional Study of II Timothy

by

GUY H. KING

CHRISTIAN LITERATURE CRUSADE Fort Washington, Pennsylvania

CHAPTER ONE -

THE PERSONS CONCERNED

II Timothy 1:1-2

1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus,

2 To Timothy, my dearly beloved son: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

THE portion of Scripture upon whose study we now set forth is one of the most moving in the whole of the Bible.

Taking its cue from the words of our verse 2, "**Timothy, my dearly beloved son,**" there is a paternal touch about the whole Epistle, which justifies us, I think, in entitling our study as we have done. It is a farewell letter at that.

I need not remind you that it was written from prison. Paul had a considerable experience of such places - at Philippi, at Caesarea, at Jerusalem, and at Rome. It was the Romans who imprisoned him, it was the Jews who brought about his arrest; but never does he describe himself as a prisoner of Jews or of Romans; always it is "**the prisoner of Jesus Christ**".

It was for his loyalty to the MASTER that he was incarcerated; and therefore there was no shame about it - but only a glorying in it. One of the longest "stretches" that he ever did was his first imprisonment at Rome, described for us in the two closing verses of the Book of Acts. That was a very lenient experience, as we know.

Throughout the whole of the two years his friends were allowed to come and go as they pleased, and he was able to exercise a very considerable ministry. Our point at the moment is that he wrote some of his most remarkable letters in that prison - Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon.

But all that was, perhaps, six years ago. Much has happened since. He was eventually released, and no doubt proceeded once more on his missionary tours. We have no precise record of his wanderings and doings at that period; but there is every likelihood of his having fulfilled the wishes and intentions that we find scattered about his various Letters, by visiting the places

mentioned. Ephesus, Macedonia, Nicopolis, Crete, Miletus, Troas, Spain - these were probably amongst the many places where he worked, and some would say that he came even to Britain. That notion is not to be too lightly dismissed, for there are not a few pointers in that direction, as Miss Strode-Jackson shows in her fascinating book, *Lives and Legends of Apostles and Evangelists*.

At Ephesus, where he had previously laboured so long, he would find quite a company of believers; and he seems now to have coordinated the work, and to have left Timothy in charge as Pastor and (though not in our modern development of the office) as Bishop. The same sort of thing appears to have taken place at Crete, where another of the apostle's Young Men was left in command, in the person of Titus.

It was to give them guidance for the proper exercise of their responsible duties that Paul wrote the First Epistle to Timothy and the Epistle to Titus, which, with this II Timothy, are known as the Pastoral Epistles, or Letters to Pastors.

Then, all of a sudden, Paul was re-arrested. Things were not all that they should be in the Roman Empire, and she had come to be nervously on edge - fearful of secret societies, and so forth. Among these latter would be the little companies of Christians, meeting in private houses; and we may be quite sure that the Jews did not fail to stir up bitter feeling, and to stoke up the fires of fear, against the Christians.

So "the followers of the Nazarene" came to be disliked in many quarters, and it only wanted a match to set everything ablaze. That "match", in an almost literal sense, came from the Emperor Nero himself. In his madness, he set fire to his capital city of Rome, and then, in order to screen himself, he blamed the Christians, giving it out that they were guilty of the crime.

It is not difficult to imagine the outburst of fury against these already suspected and unpopular people. A great wave of persecution broke forth, in the midst of which that intrepid leader of the Christians, Paul himself, was borne back to prison, to the triumphant glee of his enemies. This time it was to be, not the lenient experience of his former Roman detention, but the far more stringent experience of the rigour and squalor of the county jail.

This is for him the end - and he knows it; yet he is calm enough. He had wanted to "go" before, since that would have been "**to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better**", (Philippians 1:23). His only wish for life was that perhaps he was in some sense "needful" to his brethren. If now that need has been discharged, if now he has finished his course, he is not sad, but glad - his heart is at peace.

Yet, as he thinks things over, he quite naturally dwells upon the little Christian communities that he will be leaving behind. How will they fare? And their leaders - how will they acquit themselves?

Young Timothy, for instance, charged with the oversight of the believing companies of Ephesus, with all the extra responsibilities and perplexities arising out of the new persecution, how will he discharge his functions?

(a) He is only young - round about thirty-six, shall we say; and that is no age for such a task as his.

(b) He is decidedly delicate - a year earlier, in his first letter (v. 23) Paul had counselled him, "Use **a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities**," Not, you will observe, for sociability's sake, or for your thirst's sake; and, not a lot, but only a little. It reminds me more of the medicine bottle than of the wine bottle! But how will his health stand the strain?

(c) He is rather timid - yet, like so many such, capable of utmost daring when the crisis comes. Still, the dangers will be very great, and there is the risk of collapse.

(d) He is evidently dependent - the sort that leans very much on others. Paul is his prop, as well as his hero. He is the type that makes a splendid follower, but is normally not likely to shine as a leader - yet he has got to lead. He is all right so long as he can turn for advice and help to his spiritual father; but now that Paul is imprisoned and un-get-at-able, he will be feeling very lonely and very lost.

How well able is our GOD to overrule all these personal weaknesses, and to make Timothy, as we believe He did, "**a good soldier of JESUS CHRIST**," ready to "**endure hardness**" in the Great Campaign (2:3).

Well, Paul will send him a letter, to cheer and to encourage him - a letter that, so far as we know, turns out to be the last that he ever wrote.

"**Only Luke is with me**," says Paul in 4:11, so presumably it was to Dr. Luke that the letter was dictated. He would have this especial interest - acting as his Leader's amanuensis on this occasion, that he too knew Timothy well, and, as the physician of the party when they travelled about together, doubtless prescribed for the young man's ailments. Yes - like Paul, Luke would have a soft spot in his heart for Timothy, and would be only too glad to "take down" and to transcribe this great communication for him.

Just at the moment we are concerned with the opening passages which, as we have said, describe the persons concerned.

In the course of the whole Epistle no less than twenty-nine people are mentioned by name; and here, in these first two verses, we have the three who are the principal concern of the letter; and first there is

THE OLD MAN WHO IS THE WRITER

"**Paul the aged**" is his own description of himself in Philemon 9.

That was written six years before this, when Paul was only just turned sixty; and unless, as some think, the word should be "the ambassador", we are presented to a man old before his time. He had always lived at a great pace, never sparing himself, always putting everything into everything. It was with him as it was with his MASTER, of whom the Jews said (John 8:57):

"**Thou art not yet fifty years old,**" when He was only just over thirty!

So he commences to dictate, "**Paul**" - for, unlike ourselves, the Eastern letter-writer always began with his name.

(a) *The use of his name* serves several purposes. It reminds us, for one thing, that the letter is a human document. When the HOLY SPIRIT, according to 2 Peter 1:21, "**moved**" the "**holy men of God**" to write the Holy Scriptures, His method of inspiration was of such a nature that it did not abrogate their distinctive personalities and reduce them to automata. In mysterious fashion, the words written were their words, as well as His words: His words, as well as their words. Thus we find in all the writings the individual characteristics of the writers.

In the case of a man like Paul who wrote several Scriptures there may appear divergences of use, fully accounted for by the differences of circumstance, or by the passage of time; yet, for all that, there is generally a sufficient stratum of likeness of characteristic to establish the author's identity.

These are many words in this Epistle - Dr. Graham Scroggie says there are seventy-seven of them - which do not occur in any other of his letters, and that is one of the reasons why some scholars have held that the Pauline authorship of II Timothy is questionable. Yet how many characteristic touches are here.

Dr. Plummer is constrained to say of this supposition of forgery, "The person who forged the Second Epistle to Timothy in the name of the Apostle Paul must indeed have been a genius".

It is the almost universal testimony that all these three Pastoral Epistles - for surely they must stand or fall together - are genuinely the work of Paul. Even as they are also the work of the HOLY SPIRIT.

Again, what a deeply loved figure will that name conjure up to the mind of Timothy. The word "**Paul**" itself means "*little*" - and he seems to have been rather a little man. Oh, but only in the physical sense: in every other way, when or where has there ever been a bigger? "**His bodily presence is weak,**" is his own confession, in 2 Corinthians 10:10; and the first-century description of him, in the Acts of Paul and Thecla, agreeth thereto: "a man of moderate stature . . . bow-legged . . . bald-headed . . . long nose." No, nothing to look at; but someone to look to! What he had meant, still meant, to Timothy. To read that opening word of the letter would thrill his spirit, warm his heart, perhaps fill his eyes.

Note what is here said of:

(b) *The nature of his position* - "**an apostle of JESUS CHRIST**". There were times - for example, in the Epistle to the Galatians - when he had to fight for his claim to the title.

Timothy will not dispute his right to it; yet, as he is going to speak in a tenderly loving manner, Paul thinks it necessary, by this hint, to remind him that he writes, not only with affection, but with authority. So might a king talk to his children - as their father, yet as their sovereign.

(i) In the apostolate, he did not, I believe, take the vacated place of Judas. There are those who teach that Peter acted impulsively, and without Divine warrant, in moving for the election of Matthias. I can see no trace of evidence in the narrative to justify the theory; and I am quite sure that it would never have been advanced except for a splendid loyalty to Paul, lest Matthias should be thought to oust Paul from the place that he seemed so much more fitted to occupy. But how needless is all their fear and fuss. By the time Paul was ready, there was a second vacancy amongst the Twelve (Acts 12:1).

(ii) In a sense, others, too, were apostles - for instance, James, the LORD'S brother (Galatians 1:19), and Barnabas, alongside of Paul, Acts 14:14.

(iii) There is still another sense in which it may be true even of us - the word "**apostle**" meaning a "*sent one*".

We must first become Believers; then we are to advance to the status of Disciples - for I cannot but believe that a disciple is something further on than a Christian, in view of the stringent condition of discipleship, "**Whosoever . . . forsaketh not all that he hath . . . cannot be My disciple,**" as Luke 14:33 [see also verses 26-27] has it.

No such condition is attached to becoming a Christian: surely Ephesians 2:8-9 makes that perfectly clear. The disciple is the "*learner*"; and the MASTER cannot teach as He would unless, and until, the scholar is prepared to obey completely and follow absolutely. Now are we ready to take the higher place, to become "**apostles**" - those who are sent on His errands and on His business?

*****BBB NOTE: The word "*apostolos*" means "*sent one*" and is applied to missionaries today. I believe it is in this limited sense that the author is using it here. *****

Recall how, in Mark 3:14, He ordained the twelve original apostles "**that they should be with Him** [disciples, to be taught], **and that He might send them forth** [apostles, to be sent]". In our lesser degree may we, too, be of truly apostolic rank - qualifying for the post by the thorough-going quality of our discipleship.

It is deeply interesting to observe:

(c) *The explanation of his appointment - "by the will of God".*

Paul did not grasp it for himself, did not pull strings to get it, did not even choose it on his own account. He became an apostle, not by his choice, his will, but GOD'S. As the risen LORD JESUS explained to Ananias, in Acts 9:15, "**He is a chosen vessel unto Me.**" How happy are we if, by His grace, we have reached that place where, in the matter of our life's work, and of its great decisions, we are content to leave the choice to Him.

To be in the place, and at the work, of His appointment is, indeed, the secret of richest blessing and deepest rest. Ours but to Trust and Obey: all further responsibility is on His shoulder, not ours! When such a relationship is established, we may humbly, yet confidently, look to Him - to

guide us, to guard us, to gird us, and, if necessary, to goad us.

There is revealed here also (d) *The purpose in his call* - "**according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus**". "On the lines of . . .", says Moule; "in pursuance of . . .", says Alford; "in the service of . . .", says Moffatt. The force of that "**according to**" seems then to be that his call to the apostolate was given him for the purpose of his publishing that "good news" of the promise of life to the needy sons and daughters of men.

Put it this way:

- (a) The water - "**the promise of life**";
- (b) the spring "**which is in Christ Jesus**," an inexhaustible Fountain;
- (c) the vessel - destined to come to the spring, and to carry the promised water: "**a chosen vessel . . . to bear My Name**", which is very Water of Life to famishing souls.

Oh, blessed privilege, matchless joy - which, in our smaller measure, may be ours, as well as Paul's. Thus much, then, are we permitted to know about the old man who writes this letter - the letter of a father to his son.

And now for

THE YOUNG MAN WHO IS THE READER

Young, for it is only a year before that he wrote him in his First Epistle (4:12), "**Let no man despise thy youth.**"

We shall learn a great deal about him in the course of our studies; but, for the moment, in this preliminary glance, we shall add one or two things to what we have already said:

(a) *A great upbringing* - is an outstanding feature in the attractive picture. His home was at Lystra, his father being a Greek, and his mother a Jewess. It looks as if his father had died when Timothy was but a little chap, and his upbringing seems thus fortunately to have been in the hands of his mother and dear old grannie. The mention of the "**faith**" of these two godly souls, in 1:5, and the "**scriptures**" in the home, in 3:15, indicates the religious tone of the nurture that the growing boy enjoyed. Edersheim, in his *Sketches of Jewish Social Life*, p. 115 ff., gives an interesting account of what his education was likely to have been.

Then, in the course of time, two preachers came to the town, Acts 14:6-7. Their names were Barnabas and Paul; but because of a great miracle they wrought, they were, on the ground of an old legend, renamed by the people, Jupiter and Mercury. Personally I feel they would more nearly answer to, shall we say, Sankey and Moody - with Paul in the latter role, "**because he was the chief speaker**". Timothy was only a boy at the time, but he was greatly attracted by Paul, and deeply impressed by the preaching, the stoning, and the raising of the bold missionary. By the time we reach Acts 16:1-3, Timothy has developed into a splendid young Christian, a "**disciple**", learning and willing to learn, "**well reported**" by the brethren, and when Paul visits the town again, and observes the spiritual growth and worth of him, he takes him on to his mission party.

The great evangelist always liked to have young men with him, not only as cheery companions, but that they might be trained for the work - John Mark had proved a disappointment; now Timothy could take his place; young Titus was another of them.

There existed between Paul and Timothy:

(b) *A great relationship* - we said that, on the apostle's first visit, the youngster was very attracted by him, but evidently there was very much more in it than that: Paul then led the boy to the SAVIOUR. So he called him "**my dearly beloved son**", and in his first Epistle to him (1:2), "**my own son in the faith**"; and in referring to him, in Philippians 2:22, he says, "**as a son with the father, he hath served with me in the gospel**". There was a very beautiful and intimate companionship between this older man and younger man - this Father and Son.

And note here:

(c) *A great prayer* - Paul desires of GOD that Timothy may have "**grace, mercy, and peace**". It is an interesting thing that, in all the greetings of his other letters, his wishes are "**grace and peace**"; only in I and II Timothy, and in Titus, is "**mercy**" added. In an impish mood, Liddon once said that the reason was that they were bishops, and that bishops had such need of mercy! We shall not be so rash, or so impious, as to endorse the brother's frivolity. But what depths of meaning are in the words as they stand - "**grace**", for every service; "**mercy**", for every failure; "**peace**", for every circumstance.

How Timothy would need them all; how we need them all - whether in times of persecution, as in his case, or in more ordinary times, as in ours.

These blessings are to come from:

(d) *A great source* - "**from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord**".

- Grace from that Fountain Head is inexhaustible - ever sufficient for every possible need, as it arises.

- Mercy is there in abundance in the Heart of Love, for all who fail and fall, that they may get up and go on again.

- Peace beyond all human explanation is within our reach from Him Who, even as He stood consciously on the threshold of Gethsemane, Gabbatha, and Golgotha, could speak of "**My peace**," John 14:27.

If only, in actual daily practice, we were to reckon upon the Fatherhood, and upon the Lordship:- not merely knowing the Facts, but behaving as if they were Facts, for us personally - what peace, what grace, what all we need, would be ours, and in what rich measure.

But now it is time we turned to think more particularly of the third of the Persons Concerned here

THE GOD-MAN WHO IS THE SUBJECT

In the whole of the Epistle He is named fifteen times, and three times in these two opening verses: "**Christ Jesus**". The letter is written by Paul, written to Timothy; but it is, one way and another, written about Him.

He is the Subject. But then, so is He also the Subject of the whole Bible. Recall Acts 8:35. The Ethiopian is reading Isaiah 53., but he is completely in a fog as to its meaning - what is it all about? Philip explained that it was all about JESUS, he "**began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus**".

It doesn't matter what scripture you turn to, in some sense or other it will be about Him. The MASTER Himself "**beginning at Moses and all the prophets . . . expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning Himself**".

(i) In the Old Testament we have in story, in type, in sacrifice, in promise, in prophecy, the Preparation for Him.

(ii) In the Gospels, we have the Presentation of Him - in Matthew, as King; in Mark, as Servant; in Luke, as Man; in John, as GOD.

(iii) In the Acts, we have the Proclamation of Him, His servants going forth to be His "**witnesses**" in Jerusalem (1-7), in Judea and Samaria (8-12), and to the uttermost part of the earth (13-28).

Then (iv) in the Epistles we find the Personification of Him, the Christian life being summed up in such phrases as "**to me to live is Christ,**" and, "**I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me**".

(v) In the Revelation we come to the Predomination of Him - the LAMB on the Throne there, the LORD coming to the Throne here. So, in very truth, is He the Subject of the Book, as He is also that of this part of it.

We know that (a) Paul is always concerned - with:

- (i) Sound doctrine, he has no use for spineless teaching;
- (ii) Earnest service, he has no room for idle and selfish enjoyment of spiritual blessing;
- (iii) Holy life, he has no patience with a profession which does not issue in consistent living.

All these things will have their place in the course of this Epistle, as we shall see - for they are never for long out of his mind.

But (b) Paul is chiefly concerned - with the Person.

He knows that things cannot satisfy persons - not even spiritual things, heavenly things; and so, while dealing with the many things of the Christian life, he is continually bringing his young friend back to his association with, and his allegiance to, CHRIST JESUS.

Oh, that our hearts may be enraptured by Him - that our religion, and our spiritual experience, may be not merely of any It, but of Him. "**That I may know Him . . .**", as this same writer

expresses it in Philippians 3:10. Other knowledge, other experience, will follow; but this must Come First, and Abide First, "**that I may know Him**".

You recall how F. W. H. Myers opens and closes his grand poem on "*Saint Paul*"

"CHRIST! I am CHRIST'S! and let the name suffice you,
Ay, for me too He greatly hath sufficed.

Yea, thro' life, death, thro' sorrow, and thro' sinning
He shall suffice me, for He hath sufficed:
CHRIST is the end, for CHRIST was the beginning,
CHRIST the beginning, for the end is CHRIST."

~ end of chapter 1 ~
